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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

19 September 1961

MEMORANDUM TO GENERAL LEMNITZER

The President has asked me to pass the attached list of questions to you for transmission to General Power.

He would like General Power to respond to these questions at their meeting tomorrow, September 20th.

*Maxwell Taylor*  
Maxwell D. Taylor

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## STRATEGIC AIR PLANNING

Question #1. I understand the strategic attack plan now contains 16 "options." I gather the impression, however, that each option merely indicates an increase in the size force that is launched. Is it possible to get some alternatives into the plan soon, such as having alternative options for use in different situations? For example, the present plan is based on the "optimum mix" concept. Is it now possible to include urban areas or governmental controls, or both, from attack? If not, how soon could you develop a plan which contains such options? Can whole areas, such as China, or the European satellites be eliminated from attack? If so, at what risk?

Question #2. Berlin developments may confront us with a situation where we may desire to take the initiative in the escalation of conflict from the local to the general war level.

a. Could we achieve surprise (i.e., 15 minutes or less warning) under such conditions by executing our present plan?

b. How would you plan an attack that would use a minimum-sized force against Soviet long-range striking power only, and would attempt to achieve tactical surprise? How long would it take to develop such a plan?

c. Would it be possible to achieve surprise with such a plan during a period of high tension?

d. Would not an alternate first strike plan, even if only partially successful when implemented, leave us in a better position than we would be if we had to respond to an enemy first strike?

e. What second strike capability would probably be left to the Soviets after such an attack, assuming full, and partial, success?

f. Is this idea of a first strike against the Soviets long-range striking power a feasible one?

Question #3. A surprise attack aimed at destroying the long-range striking power of the USSR would leave a sizeable number of MIGs facing Europe.

g. Would the inclusion of these MIGs in the initial attack so enlarge the target list as to preclude tactical surprise?

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2. If so, is it possible to plan an immediate follow-on attack which would strike these targets before the first attack was completed? In particular, would our European land and sea-based air forces be suitable for this task?

Question #4. I am concerned over my ability to control our military effort once a war begins. I assume I can stop the strategic attack at any time, should I receive word the enemy has capitulated. Is this correct?

Question #5. Although one nuclear weapon will achieve the desired results, I understand that, to be assured of success, more than one weapon is programmed for each target. If the first weapon succeeds, can you prevent additional weapons from inflicting redundant destruction? If not, how long would it take to modify your plan to cover this possibility?

Question #6. What happens to the planned execution of our strategic attack if the Alert Force is launched and several hours later it is discovered that it has been launched on a false alarm? How vulnerable would we be, and how soon would the U.S. be in a position to attack the USSR?

Question #7. After the Alert Force has been launched, how do I know that our remaining forces are being used to best advantage. Are these follow-on forces automatically committed to predetermined targets, or do we have means of getting damage assessments to direct their attacks?

Question #8. Given the European situation, some of SACUR's tactical fighters now scheduled for atomic attacks may be employed for conventional support of ground forces instead. Can other forces take over the responsibility of hitting SACUR's atomic targets without jeopardizing the success of the plan materially?

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